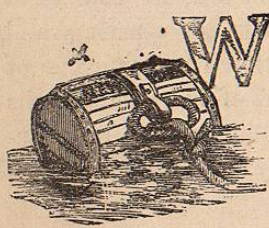


CHAPTER III.

IMPORTANT INCIDENTS OF THE REVOLUTION AND
LATER HISTORY OF MANHATTAN.

NEW YORK GOVERNMENT AT SEA—PLOT TO ASSASSINATE WASHINGTON—SHOCKING BARBARITY OF ENGLISH OFFICERS—HALE AND ANDRE, THE TWO SPIES—ARNOLD IN NEW YORK—BRITISH EVACUATION—THE BURR AND HAMILTON TRAGEDY OF 1804—ROBERT FULTON AND THE "CLERMONT"—PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS OF 1825.

NEW YORK GOVERNMENT AT SEA.



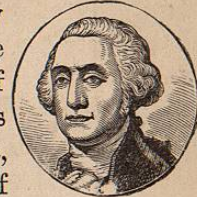
WILLIAM TRYON, the last colonial Governor, entered New York July 8, 1771. He occupied the house in the fort, which had been rebuilt after the excitement attending the negro plot subsided, and which was now again destroyed by fire. His family (except the servant girl, who was burned alive) barely escaped with life, a daughter leaping from a window of the second story. As revolution was brewing, business was so generally prostrated that no public improvements were made during his administration, except the founding of the New York Hospital. Tryon having returned to England, the government again devolved upon Cadwallader D. Colden until his return, which occurred June 24, 1775. The next day Washington entered New York on his way to Cambridge to take command of the Provincial army. The country was now fully in rebellion, and Tryon found his bed filled with thorns. The idea of rocking his weary frame and aching head into repose on the billows of the bay appears now to

have been suggested, but the fact that rest for a Crown Governor could only be found on the other side of the Atlantic was not yet so manifest. He, however, continued at his post, and kept up a semblance of authority against the Provincial Congress, until the latter part of August, when he removed his headquarters on board the "Asia," an English man-of-war, from which he for some time kept up a communication with his friends on shore. He also caused the principal archives of the city to be placed on board the ship "Duchess of Gordon." These were carried to England, but again returned by royal order in 1781.

PLOT TO ASSASSINATE WASHINGTON.



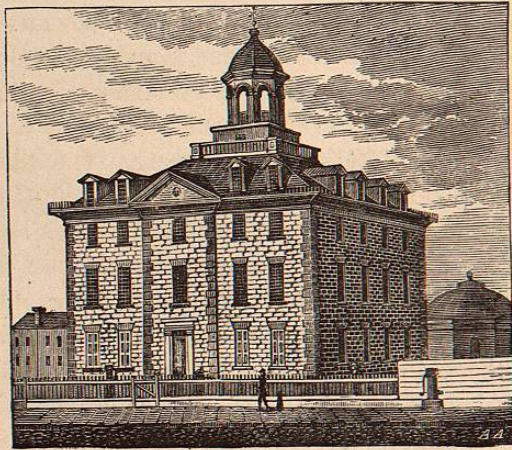
ABOUT the 24th of June, 1776, a most barbarous plot was discovered among the tories of New York, including the Mayor and several of General Washington's guards. The plan was, upon the approach of the British troops, to murder Washington and all the staff officers, blow up the magazines, and secure the passes of the town. About five hundred persons were engaged in the conspiracy, and the Mayor acknowledged that he had paid one of the chief conspirators £140, by order of Governor Tryon. One of the soldiers belonging to Washington's guards being convicted was executed in the Bowery, in the presence of twenty thousand spectators. Severity to the few was doubtless mercy to the many.



SHOCKING BARBARITY OF ENGLISH OFFICERS.



THE condition of the captured soldiers of the Continental army, and of many of the inhabitants of New York, during the Revolutionary period, presents one of the most melancholy chapters of human suffering in the history of the world. The several churches were converted into prisons, hospitals, military depots, and riding schools. The Bridewell, in its half-finished condition, the new jail, sugar-houses, and various prison-ships, were filled with soldiers and political prisoners promiscuously huddled together. In winter, without fire or blankets, they



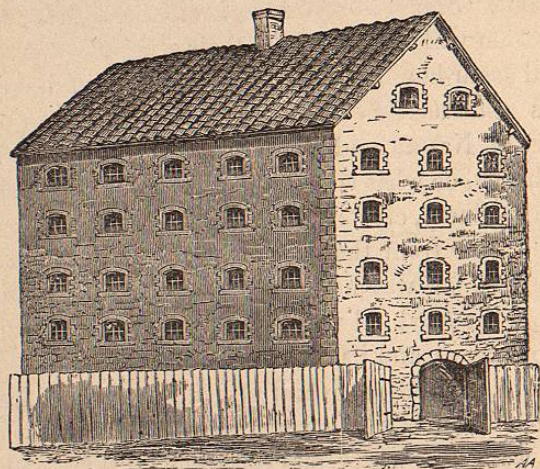
OLD PROVOST, NEW YORK.

perished with cold, and in summer they suffocated with heat. In the burning season every aperture in the walls was crowded with human heads, panting for a breath of the outside world,

while the ghastly eye turned anxiously from the misery and death within, in quest of a green leaf or a friendly countenance. Sick, wounded, and healthy lay on the same floor, rendered putrid with filth, and vocal with the sounds of human agony. Jailers and guards exhibited a love of cruelty horrid beyond expression, and many are said to have been poisoned by these fiendish attendants for their watches and silver buckles. They were not regarded as prisoners of war, but as pinioned rebels, to be starved and tortured until killed or goaded into the royal army. While a few remonstrated against these shocking inhumanities, the friends of the ministry cried out, "*Starvation, Starvation to the Rebels*; nothing but starvation will bring them to their senses."

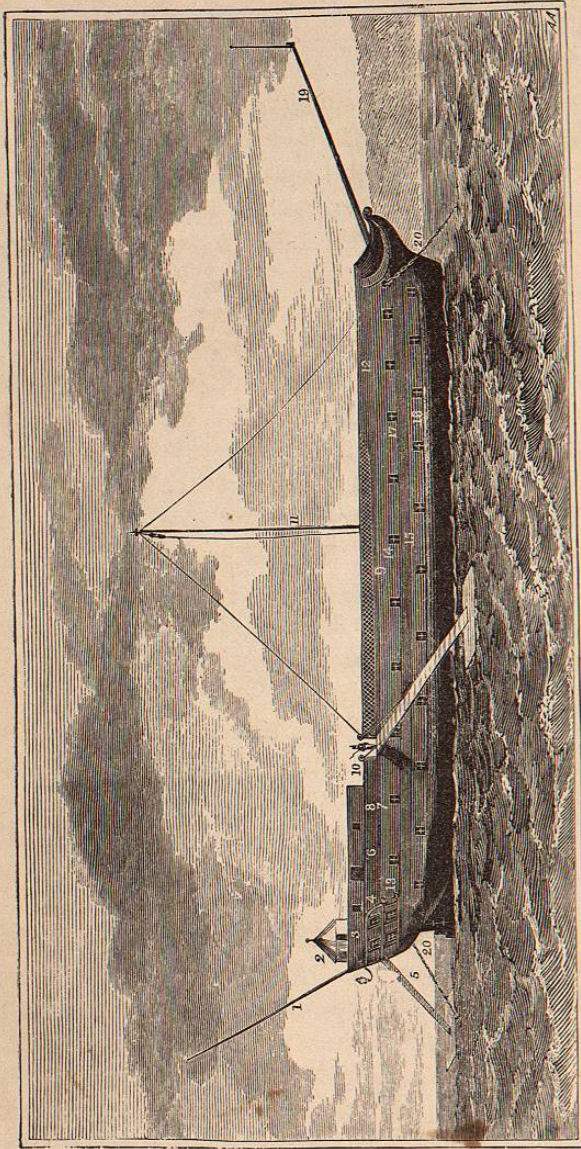
The old sugar-house, one of the chief dens of human torture, was constructed of gray stone, and stood in Liberty street, east of Nassau, and immediately adjoining the Middle Dutch Church, or what is now the old New York Post-office. This sugar refinery, erected in 1689, had passed through an honorable career from the days of Leisler downward in its legitimate use, but was now, under foreign rule, destined to depart from the good old way; its sweetness to be changed to gall and bitterness, and its cheerful business hum to the sighs and wails of the suffering and starving. The edifice contained five low stories which were each divided into two rooms. The walls were very heavy, and the windows small and deep. The yard was encircled with a close board-fence nine feet high. Within these walls were at times huddled 400 or 500 prisoners of war, without beds, blankets, or fire in winter, wearing for months the filthy garments that covered them on the day of their capture. Hot weather came, and with it the typhus fever, which prevailed fearfully, filling the dead cart on each returning morning with wrecks of wasted humanity, which were rudely dumped in the trenches in the outskirts of the city. The meagre diet of these suffering patriots consisted of pork and sea biscuit; the latter, having been damaged by salt water, were consequently very mouldy, and much worm-

eaten. We present a cut of this memorable structure, which stood as a monument of the several periods through which it had passed until 1840, when it was demolished by the march of modern architectural improvements. This cut and several others in this volume were engraved by Alexander Anderson, M.D., when in his eighty-eighth year, and were obtained, with valuable information in relation to the prisons of the Revolution, from Charles I. Bushnell, Esq., of New York, who has perhaps taken a deeper interest in the study of that interesting period than any other writer of our times.



THE OLD SUGAR-HOUSE IN LIBERTY STREET.

But dreadful as were the prisons, and the old sugar-house in Liberty street, the prison-ships are of still more terrific memory. In 1779 the "Prince of Wales" and the "Good Hope" were used as prison-ships. The "Good Hope" being destroyed by fire the following year, several old hulks formerly employed as men-of-war were anchored in the North and the East rivers, and were called hospital ships, though it soon became apparent that they were but wretched prisons for captured Americans. Among these may be mentioned the "Stromboli," the "Scorpion," the "Hunter," the "Fal-



THE JERSEY PRISON SHIP.—As moored in the Wallabout Bay, Brooklyn, in 1780. One of the most prominent of the decaying ships of the British, in which the captured Americans were imprisoned and inhumanly treated.

mouth," the "Chatham," the "Kitty," the "Frederick," the "Glasgow," the "Woodland," the "Clyde," the "Perseverance," and the "Packet."

But none attained such appalling notoriety, as a monstrous crucible of human woe, as the "Jersey." This vessel was originally a British line-of-battle ship, built in 1736, and carried sixty guns. She had done good service in the war with France, and had several times served as a part of the Mediterranean squadron. In the spring of 1776 she sailed for America as one of the fleet of Commodore Hotham, and arrived at Sandy Hook in the month of August. She was subsequently used as a storeship, then employed as a hospital ship, and was finally, in the winter of 1779-80, fitted up for a prison ship, and anchored near the Wallabout in the East river, near what is now the Navy Yard, where she lay until the close of the war, when the day of retribution arrived, and she was broken up and sunk beneath the muddy waters of the East river to rise no more. Dismantled of her sails and stripped of her rigging, with port holes closed, with no spar but the bowsprit, and a derrick to take in supplies, her small lone flag at the stern became the appropriate but unconscious signal of the dreadful suffering that raged within. Hundreds of captured prisoners were packed into this small vessel, where, with but one meal of coarse and filthy food *per diem*, without hammocks, or physicians, or medicines, or means of cleanliness, they wretchedly perished. Thousands of emaciated skeletons were during these perilous years cast into the billows of the bay, or left half covered in the sand banks and trenches. The bones of the dead lay exposed along the beach, drying and bleaching in the sun, whitening the shore until washed away by the surging tides. About twelve thousand prisoners are believed to have died on these vessels, most of whom were young men, the strength and flower of their country.

The spirit of Yankee adventure was not wanting, however, even in those floating dens of pestilence and famine. The

prisoners on board the "Jersey" secretly obtained a crow-bar, which they artfully concealed and used on windy and stormy nights to break off the port gratings, when good swimmers would plunge into the water and make their way to the shore. Thus numbers escaped to their friends, to tell the sad story of their sufferings and reveal the still sadder fact of the numbers who had died. A singularly daring and successful feat was undertaken in December, 1780, by some adventurous New England captains suffering on the "Jersey." The best boat of the ship had returned from New York about four in the afternoon, and was carelessly fastened at the gangway, with her oars on board. A storm prevailed, and the wind blew down the river, producing an immense tide. At a given signal a party of prisoners placed themselves carelessly between the ship's waist and the sentinel, while the four captains entered the boat, the fastening of which was thrown off by their friends. The boat passed close under the bow of the ship, and was at a considerable distance from her before the sentinel at the fore-castle gave the alarm and fired at her. The second boat was manned with much dispatch for a chase, but she pursued in vain. One man from her bow fired several shots at the deserters, and a few guns were discharged from the shore; but all to no effect. The boat passed Hell-gate in the evening, and arrived at Connecticut with her precious freight the next morning. Very few deserters were captured.

Civilians also suffered with the soldiers. On one of the coldest nights of the century a party of British troops crossed the Hudson river on the ice and proceeded to Newark. After capturing the little garrison they burned the academy and rifled many of the dwellings. They then entered the house of Justice Hedden, and carried him from his bed a prisoner, with no clothing to screen him from the dreadful blast save his shirt and stockings, wounding his wife in her head and breast, who remonstrated against this inhuman procedure. Fortunately, a few militia pursued them and rescued the Jus-

tice, who was dreadfully frozen, and must have perished long before reaching New York.

When the traitor Arnold entered New York, he speedily procured the arrest of more than fifty of the warmest friends of independence, who were hurled into dungeons and other places of confinement, where they long continued. The poor prisoners were kept in profound ignorance of the progress of the war, and were led to believe that their cause was hopelessly lost. Imagine the feelings of one of these sufferers, in the old sugar-house in Liberty street, as he one day stood leaning in bitterness of soul against the high fence which surrounded it, when a citizen, passing near by, without halting or turning his head, said, in a low tone, "*General Burgoyne is taken, with his whole army. It is the truth; you may depend upon it.*" His sinking hopes revived. He hobbled back into the gloomy den, to whisper in palsied ears the cheering truth, and raise, even in those death-glazed eyes, the thrice welcome vision of a country saved. That friendly informant would have suffered severely if discovered; but his contribution to these wasting patriots was more valuable than the gold of Ophir or the affection of woman. But the plant of liberty does not die of hunger, or thirst, or nakedness, or reproach, or contumely. Nay, these but accelerate its immortal development; and, amid the sufferings of the prisons, the privations of the camps, the wails and sobbings of widows and orphans, it continued its sublime expansion, until, at length, bursting through every opposition, it spread its benign shadow o'er all the land.

In the midst of these appalling sufferings, the British officers of New York amused themselves by planning a theatre, consenting themselves to become the comedians—a practice which they continued, in the edifice in John street, for several years, the tory population attending and applauding their entertainments.

HALE AND ANDRÉ, THE TWO SPIES.



COURTITUDE under the smart of unmerited sufferings is one of the rarest traits of humanity.

War is not only characterized by general suffering and disaster, involving nearly every family of the country, but by personal adventures and sacrifices, which not unfrequently leave a sting to rankle in the minds of successive generations. There is a moral sublimity in one's voluntarily casting himself between his country and its fiercest enemies, uncovering his own brave head to receive the blow, that by his sacrifice kindred and posterity may glide unscathed and peacefully down the stream of time; but this sublimity is greatly intensified when young men of brilliant abilities, stainless reputation, and of undoubted worth to society nobly assume responsibilities attended with extraordinary perils, and likely soon to culminate in saddest failure and ruin. The career of Nathan Hale and of John André, two of the most brilliant and virtuous young officers representing the opposing forces of that stormy period, presents one of the most striking examples of this kind in the annals of time. Hale was born in Coventry, Conn., June 6, 1755; graduated with high honor, at Yale College, at the age of eighteen years, and soon became a successful teacher. His parents designed him for the ministry; but the crash of arms at Lexington so aroused his patriotic impulses that he immediately wrote to his father, stating "that a sense of duty urged him to sacrifice everything for his country." He soon after entered the army as a lieutenant, and was, a few months later, promoted to the captaincy. While stationed with the troops near Boston, he was noted as a vigilant officer; and, in the early part of September, 1776, when in New York, he, with an associate, planned and cap-

tured a British sloop laden with provisions, taking her at midnight from under the guns of a frigate.

Just before the capture of New York, Washington became exceedingly anxious to ascertain the plans of the enemy, who were encamped in force on Long Island. A council of war was held, and an appeal made for a discreet officer to enter the enemy's lines and gather information.

Captain Hale, who was only twenty-one years of age, came nobly forward and offered to undertake the perilous mission. He entered the British lines in disguise, examined the island, made drawings and



memoranda of everything most important, ascertained their plans, conducting his enterprise with great capacity and address, but was accidentally apprehended in making his escape. But while Hale was making discoveries at Long Island, a portion of the British army had crossed the East river under cover of the fire of their fleet, and had captured New York, General Howe taking up temporary headquarters in the vicinity of Fiftieth street. Hale was brought to the headquarters of Howe, who delivered him to the notorious Cunningham, ordering him to be executed on the following morning, unless he should renounce the colonial cause. He was unmercifully hanged upon an apple-tree, and his remains cast into an unknown grave.

André was born in London, in 1751; was educated at Geneva, after which he entered a counting-house. Disappointed in love, he abandoned business and entered the army, where he rose by the intrinsic worth of his character to be captain, major, and finally adjutant-general, under Sir Henry